

Mississippi Public Health Laboratory SARS-CoV-2 (virus that causes COVID-19) Specimen Collection and Shipping Guidance

The Mississippi Public Health Laboratory (MPHL) is currently authorized to perform diagnostic testing for COVID-19 infections in clinical respiratory specimens using the CDC 2019-nCoV (SARS-CoV-2) real-time RT-PCR Diagnostic Panel. Spec

Required Specimen Types: Specimens should be collected as soon as possible after consultation and approval from the MSDH Office of Epidemiology. To request COVID-19 testing for a suspect case, contact the MSDH Office of Epidemiology at 601-576-7725 during normal business hours (8:00am-5:00pm Monday to Friday) and 601-576-7400 after normal business hours.

Specimen Collection: For initial diagnostic testing for SARS-CoV-2, the collection and testing of the following two upper respiratory specimens is mandatory: a nasopharyngeal swab AND an oropharyngeal swab. If available, please submit one of the following lower respiratory specimens: sputum for patients with productive coughs or Bronchoalveolar lavage (BAL)/tracheal aspirate (TA) if already collected for clinical diagnosis. The induction of sputum is not indicated and a BAL or TA should NOT be collected ONLY for COVID-19 testing. Maintain proper infection control when collecting specimens.

Specimen Type	Specimen Source	Specimen Collection
Upper respiratory REQUIRED SPECIMENS	Nasopharyngeal Swab (NP)	Use only synthetic fiber swabs with plastic shafts. Insert a swab into a nostril parallel to the palate and leave the swab in place for a few seconds to absorb secretions; repeat on the second nostril using the same swab. Place the swab into a separate 2-3 ml vial of viral transport media (VTM such as M4 or M5) and carefully break the swab applicator stick at the preformation (swab tip will remain in VTM) before tightly sealing the tube.
	Oropharyngeal Swab (OP)	Use only synthetic fiber swabs with plastic shafts. Swab the posterior pharynx, avoiding the tongue. Place the swab into a separate 2-3 ml vial of viral transport media (VTM such as M4 or M5) and carefully break the swab applicator stick at the preformation (swab tip will remain in VTM) before tightly sealing the tube.
Lower Respiratory Submit Specimens ONLY if available	Bronchoalveolar lavage or tracheal aspirate	Collect 2-3 ml into a leak-proof, sterile, screw cap sputum collection cup or sterile dry container.
	Sputum	Have the patient rinse their mouth with water and then expectorate deep cough sputum directly into a leak-proof, sterile, screw cap sputum collection cup.

Storage and Shipment: Specimens should be refrigerated at 2-8°C immediately after collection. Specimens must be packaged as Biological Substance, Category B (UN 3373) and must be shipped refrigerated (on ice packs) to the MPHL for overnight delivery. Specimens may be dropped off directly at the MPHL Monday-Friday, 8am-4:30 pm, or at a local MSDH clinic for delivery to the MPHL. Specimens must be received within 3 days of specimen collection. Please label the shipper with the following shipping address:

Mississippi Public Health Laboratory
Attention: Molecular Diagnostics Section/Thompson Facility
570 East Woodrow Wilson Drive
Jackson, MS 39216

Required Specimen Submission Forms: The submitter must complete a MSDH Form 1198, SARS-CoV-2 (Virus that causes COVID-19) Testing Requisition and the CDC Human Infection with 2019 Novel Coronavirus Person Under Investigation (PUI) and Case Report Form with each specimen set (one form per patient). Prior to specimen submission, the PUI Case Report Form must be faxed to 601-576-7497. Incomplete forms will result in reporting delays.

Test Performance and Turn-Around-Time: The MPHL will perform SARS-CoV-2 testing each working day, Monday-Friday. Testing turn-around-time will be dependent on testing volumes.

Result Interpretation:

Reported Result	Action
Presumptive positive	Specimen is referred to the CDC for additional testing. Confirmatory testing at the CDC is required.
Not Detected	Testing for SARS-CoV-2 is complete. Additional testing may be considered in consultation with the MSDH Office of Epidemiology.
Inconclusive	Specimen is referred to the CDC for additional testing. The absence or presence of SARS-CoV-2 RNA could not be determined with certainty after repeat testing of the specimen in the laboratory. Additional testing is required
Invalid	The absence or presence of SARS-CoV-2 RNA could not be determined with certainty after repeat testing of the specimen in the laboratory due to PCR inhibition. Consultation with the MSDH Office of Epidemiology is required to determine if a new specimen should be collected.

Result Reporting: The MPHL will verbally notify the MSDH Office of Epidemiology and the submitter of all positive, inconclusive and invalid results immediately upon test completion. All final MPHL results will be reported electronically by fax or the MPHL web portal within 24 hours of testing completion. All results are immediately reported to the CDC upon testing completion using an electronic laboratory report.